



**Dora**  
Department of Regulatory Agencies

# **The Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure Consumer Guide**



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## Introduction

The Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure within DORA establishes and enforces practice standards in order to protect the health and safety of Colorado citizens receiving salon services.

This office regulates five professions:

barbers, cosmetologists, estheticians, hairstylist and manicurist.

Anyone who provides the following services for the public (even if it is free) must be licensed by the Office:

- Hairdressing and styling;
- Haircutting;
- Braiding;
- Shaving;
- Manicuring;
- Removing hair with wax, depilatories or tweezers;
- Skin care or applying cosmetics;
- Performing microdermabrasion;
- Performing chemical peels; and,
- Applying permanent or temporary make-up.



To qualify for a license, individuals must complete a certain number of training hours at an approved school. Once the training is complete, the applicant must pass both a written and practical State licensure examination to demonstrate minimal competency.

The Office also registers salons and barbershops where these professional services are provided.

The Office handles consumer complaints involving unlicensed practice, gross negligence, incompetent licensees and unsanitary conditions within these establishments.

This consumer guide has been prepared so you can make informed decisions when choosing a salon and a professional for barbering and cosmetology services.

## Why This Industry is Regulated

Colorado regulates barbers and cosmetologists pursuant to its Legislative declaration in Section 12-8-102, C.R.S.: to protect your health, safety, and welfare.

The most important need to regulate barbers and cosmetologists is to avoid injury and prevent the spread of infection or disease to consumers. Failing to properly clean and disinfect something as simple as a comb can spread lice and other fungal scalp conditions from one client to another.

Colorado has specific rules on cleaning and disinfecting equipment to prevent this from happening. Without regulation, the general public cannot determine from a simple visual inspection, whether implements or other salon equipment has been properly cleaned and disinfected. Regulating the industry helps promote and ensure compliance for the public's protection.

Another reason training, licensure and regulation is necessary is that practitioners use hazardous chemicals and sharp implements. A variety of chemicals used in salon services can cause physical harm if not used correctly. These include: Hair coloring and perming products, chemical peels on the face, acrylic and gel nails.

Misuse of such chemicals can lead to serious bacterial and fungal skin infections, chemical burns and scarring, permanent hair loss, and other types of permanent or temporary physical harm.

The industry utilizes a variety of sharp implements, such as: Shears, razor blades, lancets, clippers, cuticle trimmers, etc.

The improper use of a sharp implement can penetrate beyond the living layer of skin and lead to bacterial and fungal infections, as well as the spread of blood-borne pathogens like Hepatitis.

## Before Accepting Service

### Salons and Barbershops must be registered.

All salons and barbershops must be registered with this office. The shop registration must be displayed at the place of business. Each person who performs barbering or cosmetology services in a salon or barbershop must have an individual license to practice their profession. All original licenses must be displayed at the place of business. You have every right to ask to see the license if you don't see one.

### Cleanliness

The salon or barbershop must have working equipment and all work areas must be clean.

The Rules require shop owners and licensees to clean and disinfect all tools and instruments immediately after each use. A licensed professional should never use the same tools on you without first cleaning and disinfecting them. If an item cannot be disinfected, it must be thrown away immediately after one use. If a clean set of tools is not available for use on you, do not allow the professional to perform the service. Improper cleaning and disinfection of tools and equipment can spread a contagious condition or infection from one person to another.

### Washing Hands and Feet

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting tools and instruments, professionals must wash their hands between clients. Before beginning any manicure or pedicure service, the professional should clean the feet and ask the client to wash their hands so they are clean before any service is performed.

Talk with your professional before any service so you both have a clear understanding of the expectations. It is important to tell the professional if you are taking any medications or have any permanent or temporary medical conditions, such as pregnancy that may affect the outcome of the service.

### Keep receipts

When paying for services, be sure to ask for a receipt. If something goes wrong and you need to file a complaint, the receipt will help you prove that the service took place and may help identify the professional who performed the service. If the professional accepts payment by check or credit card, also keep your cancelled check or credit card slip.

***Barbering and cosmetology services should NEVER be painful.  
Report any side effects or unpleasant experiences associated with a service to the professional and the shop owner immediately.***

## Selecting a Salon or Barbershop

The simplest and best way to find a salon or barbershop is to ask people you know where they go, and if they are satisfied with the services they receive.

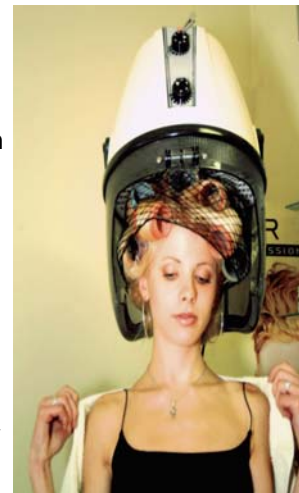
### Check to ensure the professional you choose holds a license.

Whether you choose a professional through word of mouth or advertising (or just take a chance on a new salon or barbershop), take the time to ask about the professional's experience with the services that interest you.

Ask for the professional's opinion, but don't let that be the final word. If you don't feel comfortable with what you're told, don't feel pressured to get the service at that time—remember that a second opinion can be just as important here as other areas of your life.

To verify if an individual is licensed or if a shop or salon is registered, please call the office at (303) 894-7800. You may also visit our website at: [www.dora.state.co.us/barbers\\_cosmetologists](http://www.dora.state.co.us/barbers_cosmetologists)

The place to begin the search is entitled ALISON. It is necessary to know the name of the salon or the name of the professional to complete a search.



**A licensed professional should welcome the opportunity to show you that they are licensed by DORA.**

## Scopes of Practice/Types of Service



**Barbering** is the practice of cutting or styling the hair, giving facials and shaving.

A common tool used in most barbershops is electric clippers. Like all other tools or equipment used on a client, these must be cleaned and disinfected prior to each use with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant.

The disinfectant container must be used according to manufacturer's instructions. Many clippers have a detachable blade. You should see a barber clean and disinfect electric clippers by removing the blade, cleaning away any debris, and using an approved disinfectant on the blade. Make sure your barber uses only clean, disinfected equipment on you during any service.

**Cosmetology** is the practice of cutting, styling or coloring the hair; providing skin care; manicuring and pedicuring.

**Hairstyling** is the practice of cutting, coloring, applying hair extensions, arranging, braiding and styling the hair.



**Esthetician** services are the practice of giving facials, applying makeup, providing skincare, and removing hair with depilatories, waxing or the use of tweezers.

**NOTE:**

***People who demonstrate, recommend, or sell cosmetics in retail stores are not required to be licensed.***



**Manicuring** services are the practice of trimming, cleaning or coloring the natural nail, and applying artificial nails to the hands or feet.

## Chemical Hair Services

For all chemical services, a towel can be used to keep the cape or smock from coming in direct contact with the skin. A towel or cotton will also protect the client from any solution that may drip during the service. (The operator may also apply petroleum jelly to protect the skin). If the towel is too wet, it should be changed. If the towel or cotton has absorbed chemical drips, prolonged exposure can burn your skin.

If you feel chemicals dripping on your skin, any burning sensation, or discomfort, immediately inform the professional.

Be sure to wait the number of days (or hours) recommended by your professional before you shampoo or use any hot implements on your hair.

If not, the results will not be what you expect.

Chemical services like permanent waving, straightening, hair lightening or coloring all cause permanent changes to the hair. Only licensed cosmetologists, hairstylists and barbers in registered salons or barbershops may legally perform chemical hair care services.



If you are going to have chemical services done, and your hair is in *questionable condition*, ask the professional to do a pretest before performing the service.

A questionable condition as an example can be any allergies, lice, dandruff, and or if you've recently had other services performed on the hair.

***See the types of pretests on the next page.***



## Hair Pretests

**Curl Test:** This test will help determine how the hair will react to a perm. It is usually done on tinted, bleached, over processed hair, or on hair that shows signs of damage. A test curl also indicates the processing time and curl results based on the rod size and the product used.

**Strand Test:** This test will help determine how the hair will react to a color service. It is usually done before a treatment to determine development time, color result, and the ability of the hair to withstand the effects of chemicals. If hair is color-treated, or if you are visiting a new professional, ask for a strand test to make sure that you get the desired result.

**Patch Test:** The FDA recommends that a “patch test” be performed before any permanent hair color is used. The test involves applying a small amount of the product to your skin 24 hours before the service. It will help determine if you will have an allergic reaction or sensitivity to a chemical or product. There may be a charge for a consultation or pretest, so be sure to ask in advance.



## Esthetician Services

### Chemical Peels

Chemical Peels is a process that removes layers of the skin with commercial products. Various acids are applied to the face for a few minutes each day for several days. The skin reddens as if sunburned, then darkens and peels away, revealing a layer of sensitive, new skin. Recovery time varies from days to weeks or longer, depending upon the depth of the peel.

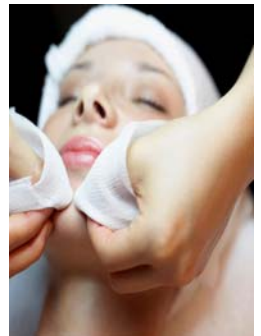
**Always follow any skin peel service with sunscreen to protect the newly exposed skin.**

Chemical exfoliation smoothes wrinkles, reduces scars and blotchy areas, and improves the overall appearance of normal skin.

A licensed esthetician or cosmetologist must obtain 24 hours of training before performing chemical peels. Licensees may only use products designed to remove the uppermost (dead) layers of the skin. The maximum strengths that an esthetician or cosmetologist can use without the supervision of a licensed physician are listed below.

### Chemical Peel Strength

- 30% alpha hydroxyl acid and lactic acids with a pH of 2.5 or lower strength (if the number is lower than 2.5, the product is stronger. If the number is higher than 2.5, the product is weaker).
- 20% beta hydroxyl acid
- Trichloroacetic Acid (TCA) with levels less than 20%
- 2% resorcinol



**Before scheduling any exfoliation procedure, follow these tips:**

**Tip #1.** Ask for names of satisfied customers who have received this type of procedure. Contact them and ask if they were satisfied with the service or if they had any complications.

**Tip #2.** Ask what changes will occur in your skin during each phase of the procedure, what type of symptoms to expect, and how the procedure will feel.

**Tip #3.** Ask the professional to show you *actual photographs* of their past clients at various phases of the exfoliation service. Thoroughly discuss all aspects of the procedure, especially safety issues, hazards, skin types, and any conditions that may increase risks.

**Tip #4.** Advise the professional of all medications you are taking, particularly Accutane®, Retin A®, or any other acne medications. Use of some over the counter products may change the skin causing it to peel off with the hair when the wax strip is removed.

**Tip #5.** Ask to see the product to be used, and find out if it is a commercially prepared product.

**Tip #6.** Ask if the professional will be mixing any chemicals before they are applied to the skin. If in doubt, ask to see a copy of the product manufacturer's instructions and a document called the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

**Tip #7.** If you experience any symptoms that are more severe than those that were explained to you by the professional, call your Doctor immediately. If you have to seek medical attention, take photos of the affected areas as proof you have been harmed.

**Tip #8.** Ask to see the estheticians' 24 hour Certificate of Completion for the post graduate training.

If you have any doubts about the procedure or about the skin care professionals abilities, do not have the service performed.

## Esthetician Services

### Microdermabrasion

Microdermabrasion is a form of mechanical exfoliation. Microdermabrasion is achieved by spraying high-grade micro-crystals that are composed of corundum powder or aluminum dioxide across the skin's surface through a closed stainless steel or glass pressurized wand; which then vacuums the skin to remove any debris and residue. Microdermabrasion is used for treating skin with sun damage, fine lines and wrinkles, enlarged pores, and coarse textured skin.

Licensed cosmetologists and estheticians may only perform this service after receiving 14 additional hours of training in the area of microdermabrasion. The esthetician or cosmetologist should be able to show you their certificate of training.

You should not receive a microdermabrasion service if you have any open sores, lesions, eczema or psoriasis, inflammatory acne, or infected pustules in the area to be treated.

## Permanent Make-up

Permanent Makeup or Facial Cosmetic Pigment Implantation services means beautifying the face by inserting or implanting facial cosmetic pigment under the surface of the human skin.

Like tattoos, the color or pigment is applied with a needle, or other means, to produce a permanent or semi-permanent mark visible through the skin to the client's face that includes the application of eyeliner, eye shadow, lip color, cheek color, and facial scars.

Licensed cosmetologists and estheticians may only perform this service after receiving 132 hours of training in the area of permanent make-up. The licensee should have a certificate of completion at their place of business or in their possession.

If a licensed esthetician or cosmetologists performs services beyond the client's face such as pigmentation of areas involving reconstructive surgery or trauma, repigmentation of the areola, and body art, they can only do this under the direct supervision of a licensed physician according to the laws of the Colorado Department of Health, Colorado Board of Medical Examiners, and local and county regulatory authorities.



## Manicuring Services

### Artificial Nails

Different types of artificial nails may be applied to natural nails to enhance their length and make them stronger. The most common are acrylic and fiberglass applications.

Whether you will be happy with artificial nails depends on several factors, such as: Your lifestyle, the type, and the length of the nails you choose. In addition, you may discover that you have an allergic reaction to the chemicals in artificial nail products.

Speak to your manicurist or cosmetologist and discuss what your hands go through in a normal day to determine the appropriate products and length.

### Nail Lifting and Infections

Sometimes the artificial nail begins to lift around the edges, allowing moisture to get trapped under it. If left untreated, bacteria may begin to grow under the product (causing a green or brown discoloration). If this occurs, your manicurist or cosmetologist should immediately remove the artificial nails and refer you to a doctor. Do not have the nails reapplied until your natural nails are completely healthy. Without proper treatment, these conditions could result in a permanent deformity of the nail. It should not be painful to have artificial nails removed. If the process causes you any discomfort, tell your professional immediately.



### Electric Nail Files

Electric nail files are often used to file artificial nails and to reduce calluses. A licensed manicurist or cosmetologist may only use files that are specifically designed for manicuring and must follow the manufacturer's directions. The drill bits for electric files must be cleaned and disinfected before use on each customer. If your professional uses a drill bit (or any other implement) that has not been properly cleaned and disinfected, you run the risk of contracting an infection. Sandpaper-type drill bit coverings must be thrown away after only one use. If the sleeve or sander has white particles on it, it is not clean.

### Electric File Safety Course

The licensed manicurist or cosmetologist must complete 8 hours of training in the area of electric file safety and must have a certificate of completion and should be able to produce it.

# Manicuring Services

## Pedicures

Pedicures can be a great source of pleasure, relaxation and a welcome relief to those who have trouble tending to their feet. It is important to be aware of what a manicurist may legally perform.

**For your protection, do not wax or shave your legs within 2 days prior to receiving a pedicure.** When you shave, your skin is broken leaving you susceptible to infection. Pedicures fall under the practice of manicuring (nail care) and includes cutting, trimming, cleaning and coloring the toenails. The rules prohibit licensees from working on a person with an infection, a communicable disease, broken or inflamed skin. Thus, if a client has athlete's foot, eczema, or other similar conditions, the professional can refuse the service to protect other customers and themselves.



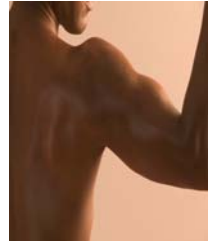
It is illegal for licensed professional to use razors and callus shavers during pedicures. Before receiving any nail service, you should inform the licensee if you are diabetic, have a peripheral vascular disease (such as arteriosclerosis), or are taking any blood-thinning medication, including daily doses of aspirin. This will alert your manicurist to take special precautions or not perform the service at all.



## Waxing by Manicurist

A statutory change to the Barber and Cosmetologist Law expanded the scope of practice for manicuring to permit manicurists to wax clients' arms up to the elbows and legs below the knees.

A licensed manicurist may only perform this service after receiving 6 additional hours of training in the area of waxing. The manicurist should be able to show you their certificate of training.



## Pedicure Foot Spas

In November, 2004, a bacterial outbreak occurred in a California salon, where over 30 infections were confirmed. Two years earlier, a bacteria outbreak happened in Watsonville, California where 110 people were infected at a single nail salon. The cause - dirty pedicure footbaths.

The infection was non-tuberculosis mycobacteria, which causes non-healing lesions, oozing sores, boils and skin ulcers on the legs.

The bacteria is commonly found in low levels in water supplies. Under certain conditions, the germs can multiply rapidly and more easily infect the skin. If the footbath is not properly cleaned and disinfected, bits of hair, skin and other debris accumulate and become breeding grounds for the germs.

It is mandatory for the licensed professional to clean and disinfect all pedicure equipment before providing this type of service to each client.

**Cleaning** is washing with liquid soap and water, detergent, or antiseptics to remove all visible residue from the footbath.

**Disinfecting** is the use of chemicals that destroy pathogens on implements and other nonliving surfaces that renders an item safe for handling, use, and disposal, acceptable disinfectants such as EPA-registered bactericidal, fungicidal, and virucidal disinfectants; 10% bleach solution; 70-90% isopropyl alcohol; and 70-90% ethyl alcohol may be used to properly disinfectant foot spas. A footbath can only be disinfected after it is cleaned.

Colorado salons are required to clean and disinfect foot spas after each client and at the end of every day. The salons must also keep a record of the daily cleaning and disinfecting.



## Freelance Services in a Home

Colorado licensees are allowed to provide services to a client in the client's home. If you need home services, call your licensed professional.

Explain why you cannot visit the salon and ask if they or any other licensee at the salon would be available to provide the service you request at your home. Licensees providing home services must hold a license and follow all the health and safety laws and rules just as they would in a salon or barbershop.

### Un-regulated Services

The Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure **does not** regulate certain services performed in a salon or barbershop. The Office does not establish any specific sanitation, training, or minimum competency standards for these services, and these individuals cannot lead consumers to believe that they have been licensed by DORA. Before you have any of these services done, find out what type of training the individual has received, and ask for references.



## Un-regulated Services

### Body Piercing/Tattooing

The State Department of Health's law establishes sterilization guidelines and requires county health departments to conduct annual inspections of establishments offering these services. Practitioners are required to register with their local county health departments.



### Tanning Salons

Some cities and counties regulate tanning facilities; therefore, it may be necessary to contact the city or county government for any licensing requirements.



### Retail Stores

Retail stores sell cosmetic products and often you'll see an open product that you can sample. Resist the urge to sample it. You do not know how many people have used the sample nor do you know if people have re-used the product.

## Illegal Products & Techniques

### Razor-Type Callus Shavers

These are tools that are fitted with razor blades. It is illegal for professionals to use any tool that cuts skin such as "cheese grater" type instruments, or scalpel-type blades, or to shave calluses during pedicures.

### Methyl Methacrylate Nail Liquid

Some manicurists and cosmetologists who perform artificial nail services may use a product known as liquid Methyl Methacrylate monomer (MMA). The FDA discourages the use of this chemical in fingernail products. Although (MMA) is difficult to detect because it is not visually distinguishable from other regular nail acrylic products, consumers should be aware of the following warning signs: a very strong and strange odor, different from regular acrylic nail products, very hard nails that may be difficult to file, and artificial nails that will not easily soak off in solvents.

The danger is that you could have a severe allergic reaction to products containing this chemical, and there is the potential for dangerous nail infections resulting from breaks in the natural nail. The acrylic nail adheres so strongly to your natural nail that it may cause the natural nail to be removed from the nail bed under extreme pressure. DORA prohibits the use of MMA in salons.



### Injections and Laser Hair Removal

Licensed professionals cannot independently give injections or apply any topical prescription medications. If a professional offers these services, such as Botox, you should note whether a physician is supervising the professional. It is illegal for a professional to perform laser hair removal without the delegated authority of a physician. The FDA classifies the equipment used to perform laser hair removal as a "medical device", and use of these machines is considered the practice of medicine. A person working under the direct supervision of a licensed physician under Board of Medical Examiners Rule 800 may perform laser hair removal services.



# How and When to File a Complaint

If you are unhappy with the services you received, discuss your concerns with the professional, manager, or owner of the salon or barbershop. Many complaints can be quickly resolved this way. You should be aware that many individuals in the beauty industry are independent contractors who rent booth space from the salon or barbershop owner. Because these professionals are not employees, the salon or barbershop owner may not have control over the quality of the services rendered or the authority to demand a refund.



The Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure does not have the statutory authority to mandate a professional to provide refunds for bad services. It may be necessary to file a claim through small claims court for this purpose.

If you are injured, file a complaint with DORA, specifically the Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure. Also, take photographs of the condition/injury and have a health care professional look at the injury to provide independent confirmation.

If you believe there is unlicensed activity, safety, or sanitation violations, again, please send us a written complaint. Please keep in mind that it may be necessary for office staff to contact you for more information.

For more information about filing a complaint and obtaining a complaint form, please see the "File a Complaint" section of the website at:

[www.dora.state.co.us/barbers\\_cosmetologists](http://www.dora.state.co.us/barbers_cosmetologists)

## Summary

The next time you visit a salon or barbershop to receive a haircut, manicure, pedicure or other service, look around and see if the salon/barbershop is complying ask the following:

- Is the over all appearance of the shop clean?
  - Is a salon/barbershop registration posted?
  - Are original professional licenses posted?
  - Are the professionals performing only those services for which they are licensed? (e.g. A manicurist or an esthetician cannot cut hair).
  - Are the professionals properly cleaning and disinfecting their instruments after every client?
  - Are emery boards, cotton pads, nail buffers and similar type items immediately thrown away after use on clients?
- Note: Some nail files can be disinfected and don't have to be thrown away depending on whether or not the tool survives the cleaning and disinfection process.
- At the professional's workstation; are clean items stored separately from dirty ones?
  - Are items labeled to identify them as clean or dirty?
  - Are combs and brushes clean?
  - Are manicuring instruments stored in a clean container?
  - Are clean towels stored separately from soiled ones?
  - Are dirty towels put in a separate receptacle from the clean towels?
  - Is a clean towel provided for each client?
  - Did the professional wash their hands before beginning services on you?
  - Did the professional wash your hands and/or feet before beginning services?
  - Are the professionals using prohibited instruments such as callus shaver blades?

**Note: Use of this instrument is illegal except when performed by a licensed physician. Do not permit a licensed professional use them on you and don't ask them to use it on you if you take it to the salon. You can use one on yourself in your own home.**

# CONSUMER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

All Colorado citizens who utilize barbering or cosmetology services have a right to:

- Receive competent professional services by licensed professionals.
- Verify the names, licenses and credentials of beauty professionals providing services.
- Receive clear explanations and costs of the services offered.
- Refuse any services offered.
- File a complaint with the Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure regarding an incompetent or dangerous professional, salon, barbershop or an unlicensed person.
- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Have service options, expected results, and side affects explained before receiving the service.

The complete rules can be found on our website at:

[www.dora.state.co.us/barbers\\_cosmetologists](http://www.dora.state.co.us/barbers_cosmetologists)

If you're not comfortable with what you see in a salon or barbershop, the best thing you can do is leave. Beauty or barbering services should not hurt, injure, or put you at risk of infection.



**DORA** is dedicated to preserving the integrity of the marketplace and is committed to promoting a fair and competitive business environment in Colorado. Consumer protection is our mission.





# Dora

Department of Regulatory Agencies

**Colorado Office of Barber and Cosmetology Licensure**

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**For more information**

[www.dora.state.co.us/barbers\\_cosmetologists](http://www.dora.state.co.us/barbers_cosmetologists)

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